

DAVIS, NELSON HENRY

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DAVIS, NELSON HENRY, born at Oxford, Worcester County, Massachusetts, September 20, 1821; son of Stephen and Pamela (Wheelock) Davis; never married.

Entered the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, N. Y., in 1841, was graduated in 1846, and assigned to the 3d U. S. Infantry; during the Mexican War he was engaged in the siege of Vera Cruz, the battles of Cerro Gordo, Contreras and Cherubusco and the assault and capture of the City of Mexico; for which he was brevetted 1st. Lieutenant, August 20, 1847.

Served in California after his promotion to 1st. Lieutenant, 2d U. S. Infantry, participating in the Sierra Nevada Expedition, 1849-50 and the Rogue River Campaign, of 1853; promoted to Captain in 1855 while in Dakota; became Colonel, 7th Massachusetts Volunteers, September 4, 1861, and served in the defense of Washington, D.C. until November 12 when he became Major and Assistant Inspector General on the staff of General McClellan; brevet Lieutenant Colonel for gallant and meritorious conduct at the battle of Gettysburg, July 3, 1863.

Assigned to the District of New Mexico where he served as Assistant Inspector General from November, 1863, to November, 1868, being promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on June 13, 1867; he had lately arrived at Fort Whipple from Tucson with an escort of 9 California Volunteers when the Territorial Census was taken in April, 1864, and is listed as Major, U. S. Army, age 42, resident in Arizona 2 months; it was upon his recommendation that Fort Whipple was moved to near the new town of Prescott and Fort Goodwin established on the upper Gila River; late in the following month

he assumed command of two Companies of California Volunteers at Fort Bowie for an expedition against the Gila Apaches; the following is an extract from his report:

"Next day (May 27) examined a portion of the valley of the San Carlos; at night marched with a part of the command some 10 miles up this valley and surprised, partially, two Indian rancherias; killed 3 and took 4 prisoners, 3 of whom were children; their dog gave warning of our approach; destroyed a number of fields of corn, wheat and beans.

"From here I marched in a southeasterly direction, and 2 miles from the mouth of the San Carlos river I entered the big canyon on the Gila, down which I followed 8 or 10 miles and crossed the high Mescal Mountains with part of my command, to surprise and attack some rancherias I learned were there, and, after a hard night's march, dividing my force, one under Captain Tidball, the other under Captain Burkett, we surprised and attacked the Indians at daybreak (May 29), killing 49, and with some taken the day previous, captured 16 prisoners, besides many more who were wounded, some of whom were trailed by their blood.

"Destroyed several fields of corn and wheat; a large quantity of mescal was taken and furnished the troops, who were short of rations, and a considerable destroyed; 1 mule and 4 Indian horses, were taken, 2 carbines, 1 double-barreled shot gun, 1 Colt's pistol, 2 saddles, 2 pairs of fine saddle-bags and \$660 in gold were also captured, with some ammunition and a variety of other articles--hides, skins, etc.--and the rancheria, with much stuff, was burned. Two very distinguished chiefs were killed in the engagement; one, after being mortally wounded, thrust his own spear into his chest and expired."

For this service he was made a Colonel by brevet and on November 10, 1864, the 1st. Arizona Territorial Legislature adopted the following concurrent resolution introduced by Gilbert W. Hopkins:

That the thanks of the people of Arizona are hereby presented, through this Legislative Assembly, to the brave, active, and persevering Lieutenant Colonel Nelson H. Davis, Inspector-General of the Department of New Mexico, for his able, efficient, and valuable service while in Arizona, in the exploration of the country, and successful expeditions against the hostile Apaches.

General J. H. Carleton, the District Commander at Santa Fe, had confidence in his judgment and adopted many of his recommendations with respect to the disposition of troops in Arizona; after leaving New Mexico he became Colonel and Inspector General of the Department of Missouri and later served in the Atlantic Division; on November 23, 1883, he was promoted to Brigadier General and appointed Inspector General of the Army serving until his retirement for age on September 20, 1885.

Died at Governors Island, New York, May 15, 1890, aged 68; buried _____ Cemetery.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Poston, C.D. - Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1864, pp. 294-303, 309-310.
Lockwood, F.C. - The Apache Indians, N.Y., 1938, pp. 148-155, 157.
Dunn, J. P. - Massacres of the Mountains, N.Y., 1886, pp. 39-391.
Twitchell, R.E. - Leading Facts of New Mexico History, p. 208.
Farish, T.E. - History of Arizona, 1916, Vol. 3, pp. 282-283.
1st. Arizona Territorial Legislature, 1864 - Journals, p. 231.
U.S. Military Academy - Annual Reunion of Graduates, 1890, pp. 52-54 (obituary).
The Army & Navy Journal, May 17, 1890, p. 716, 1-2 (obituary).
The New York Times, May 16, 1890, 5:4 (obituary).

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Any references to him in the Arizona Miner.